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ABSTRACT

Practical strategies to help principals manage their time more effectively are offered in this guidebook. Because superintendents' expectations of principals' duties often contrast with the amount of time principals actually expend in performing various duties, this lack of understanding and time results in the "hurried principal syndrome." Practical suggestions are offered for various situations, some of which include the following: identifying goals; organizing memos and correspondence; scheduling appointments; dealing with conflicts and parent concerns; handling telephone distractions and drop-in visits; delegating tasks; reducing transaction costs; acting as a systems manager; using a computer for correspondence and creating a research bank; and coping with stress. (LMI)

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THE HURRIED PRINCIPAL

A MANUAL OF STRATEGIES FOR TIME MANAGEMENT

DR. ROBERT L. FURMAN
AND
RICHARD J. ZIBRIDA

Furman Educational Resources
124 Johnston Drive
McMurray, PA 15317

EA 024 582

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FIRST EDITION

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FOREWORD

In your mind's eye, picture a city composed of many people who belong to different groups and have many and varied interests. Think of the magnitude of the job of caring for the welfare of each citizen within the group. Think of the challenge of directing each day's activities for the entire citizenry so that everything runs smoothly and efficiently, without forgetting the individual's need for recognition and growth.

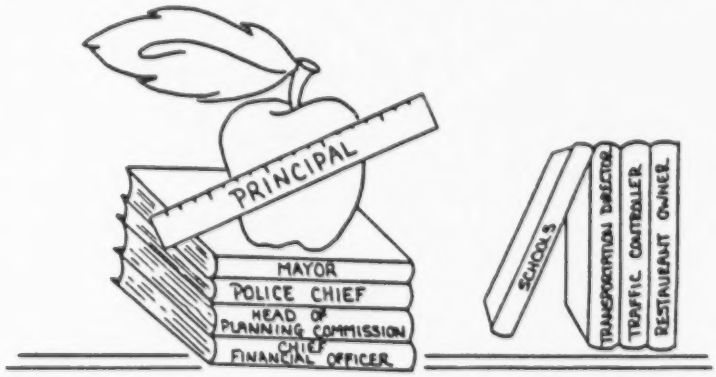
Take that city and place it within a single building. In charge, place an individual who has experienced the meaning of the phrase, "The buck stops here!" make that person responsible for everything that happens in the city. Make him/her mayor, police chief, restaurant owner, transportation director, traffic controller, head of the planning board, and chief financial officer.

It is overwhelming. Well, when we look at a modern school, we cannot help but see our "city," a place with young and old alike living their lives, working hard to do the best job they can. The principal of the building has all the responsibilities we have mentioned, plus the mandate to be the educational leader, setting the tone of the learning situations for each member of the school, teacher as well as student.[1]

It is a constant juggling act for the modern day principal to allocate enough time to get the ever expanding, complex job accomplished. This manual represents an attempt to give the school principal practical strategies and ideas for managing time efficiently. The key word in Time Management is Management, not Time. Concerning the use of time, Rowen maintained that . . . "time is one commodity that is unbiased, available to all in equal amounts, does not cost us anything monetarily, and is completely at our own disposal . . . we cannot store it, we cannot spend it in advance, we never seem to have enough of it, and we cannot retrieve it once it is used. The main difference to each of us is the way we use the time that is available."[2]

Dr. Robert Furman

[1]P. Susan Mamchak and Steven R. Mamchak, *School Administrators Public Speaking Portfolio*, 1983, p. 63.
[2]R. Rowen, "Keeping the Clock from Running Out," *Fortune*, 1978, pp. 76-78, 98.



INTRODUCTION

THE NEED FOR TIME MANAGEMENT

For hundreds of years people have been concerned about the need to wisely delegate their time, lest they become unable to accomplish their goals. The emperor Charlemagne was said to have etched candles to represent specific divisions of time. When a candle had burned down to a particular mark, it was time to move on to another task. Napoleon made it a rule of thumb not to answer correspondence for six months hoping that problems that might be presented would go away . . . and they often did. These were in fact, Charlemagne's and Napoleon's strategies for dealing with time management and stress.

Principals today find themselves with the same dilemma that confronted Charlemagne, Napoleon and thousands of others throughout recorded history . . . where can time be found to do all the things that have to be done? Additional time is unavailable, resulting in our need to closely manage what little time we have.

PRINCIPAL'S DUTIES ACCORDING TO PRINCIPALS

To further complicate the problem of Time Management, there appears to be little agreement between principals and their superiors as to how principals should use their time. A number of years back, a regional consortium of principals was given a list of what was considered to be a principal's job activities. The principals were asked to prioritize the list starting with the activity that they felt required the most time and ending with the activity that required the least amount of time.

The consensus of the principals surveyed resulted in the following order of activities from the most time-consuming to the least time-consuming. Keep in mind that this was how the principals themselves saw their time to be expended. The principals listed the following order:

1. Paper Work
2. Meetings
3. Discipline Problems
4. Cafeteria Supervision
5. Parent Concerns/Conferences
6. Conferences with Teachers/Staff
7. Curriculum Activities
8. Supervising Teachers

PRINCIPAL'S DUTIES ACCORDING TO SUPERINTENDENTS/ SCHOOL DIRECTORS

Interestingly, superintendents and school directors were asked to take the same ten job activities and prioritize them starting with the activity that they thought deserved the greatest amount of time. Once again, the list was to end with the activity that required the smallest time expenditure. The resulting superintendents-school directors list follows:

1. Supervising Teachers
2. Curriculum Activities
3. Conferences with Teachers/Staff
4. Meetings
5. Parental Concerns/Conferences
6. Discipline Problems
7. Paper Work
8. Cafeteria Supervision

HURRIED PRINCIPAL SYNDROME

A comparison of the two lists quickly reveals that what principals do with their time and what superintendents and school directors think should be done with a principal's time, are often in direct contrast. This contrast typifies the frustration principals feel because they sense they are not doing what is expected. The reality of the matter, it seems, for whatever reasons, is simply that superintendents and school directors do not have an accurate perspective on the amount of time demanded of their building principals in each of the task areas. This lack of understanding and time to devote to the job requirements results in the HURRIED PRINCIPAL SYNDROME.

PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

It is not the intention of these authors to attempt to delineate and prioritize a principal's job responsibilities, but to provide the principal with tested and proven strategies that reduce the amount of time needed to perform the required job functions. Research has shown that what we accomplish depends more on how we use our time rather than how much time we have.

Many of the ideas and strategies contained in this manual had to be extrapolated from the business community since there is a paucity of literature available for educators in the area of time management.

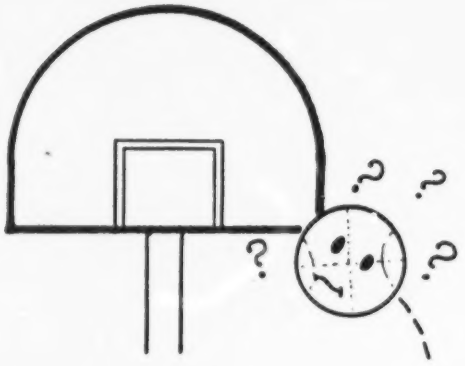
IDENTIFYING GOALS

GOAL SETTING

Goal setting is a tactic for specifying the direction you set for yourself and monitoring progress in that direction. The literature on goal setting theory consistently shows strong positive relationships between goal setting and task performance. President John F. Kennedy's establishment of a national goal to have a man walk on the moon by the end of the 1960's decade serves as an example of the power associated with the goal setting process. The power of goal setting comes from the fact that one's efforts are focused and concentrated. There is a reduction in the amount of futile effort being expended. The goal setting process has proven to be valuable in supervising and working to develop the skills of a teaching staff.

SHOOTING FOR GOALS

If you are like most principals, I'm sure you have made classroom observations where you have collected a wealth of data, returned to your office, sorted through your notes and spent a significant amount of time trying to identify the most meaningful information to share with the teacher. This process is very time consuming and limited in impact because the scope of the data we usually collect is too broad and the feedback we give is too general in nature. We can compare this scenario to playing a basketball game on a court with no baskets. The players run up and down the court, take a lot of shots, exert a great deal of energy, get physically exhausted and never score because they have no goals. You must have goals to score.



GOAL SETTING FOR CLINICAL SUPERVISION

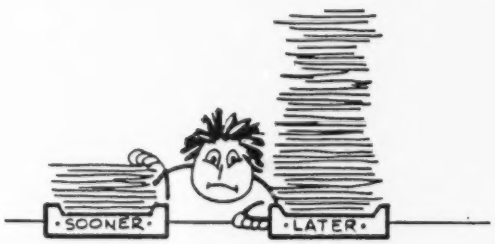
I suggest a clinical approach to supervision which will save you significant time. In this process, prior to the classroom visit, collaboratively identify instructional improvement goals with the teacher. When you visit the classroom, focus your data collecting efforts on these improvement goals. In this way, you will save valuable time and your efforts will be more meaningful to the teacher.

TRAF IT

TRAF IT?

All of us need to have some type of system for handling the voluminous amounts of paperwork that tend to "tie us down and take away our time." TRAF IT[3] may be the answer.

TRAF IT is a method that provides an effective system of categorizing and then reacting to the tremendous amounts of written correspondence that we receive each day, whether by U.S. mail, inter-office mail, correspondence from parents, notes from our staff, etc.



T — THROW IT OUT

First to be considered is "T" which stands for "throw it out." For example, when I first receive the U.S. mail, I quickly look through and immediately discard about 95% that I judge to be "junk mail." "T" somehow seems to best apply to junk mail but it can be used for other written correspondence that you feel to be of no value to you.

R — REFER IT

"R"stands for "refer it." If I feel something would be of interest to a certain staff member or requires the action of someone else, I write a short note, clip it to the correspondence, and put it in the appropriate mailbox.

A — ACT UPON

All written correspondence not being handled by "T" (throw it out) or "R" (refer it), are subject to the other two TRAF options. One of these options is "A, act upon it." First, you should work your way through the entire pile of mail categorizing each piece. After the categorizing is complete, return to your "A" pile, doing the tasks that require immediate attention first. It is advisable to quickly act upon many of these "A" correspondences because our job has a way of snowballing. Tomorrow will bring many new tasks in the mail. Some "A" mail will require long term involvement and time should be appropriated accordingly.

F — FILE IT

The fourth option is "F, file it." Before filing a correspondence, it is wise to make a judgment as to when it will no longer be of use since a recent survey concluded that 74% of all the paperwork that we file will not be seen again until we clean out our files. A hand-written date in the corner of the page will tell your secretary when the paper can be removed. Over the summer it will be an easy task for her to update your files. Your time will not be needed in rereading the files to determine if the papers should be discarded or retained. You have already made that judgment with the first reading.

[3]Stephanie Winston, "The Organized Executive," 1990.

COLOR CODED ACTION FILES

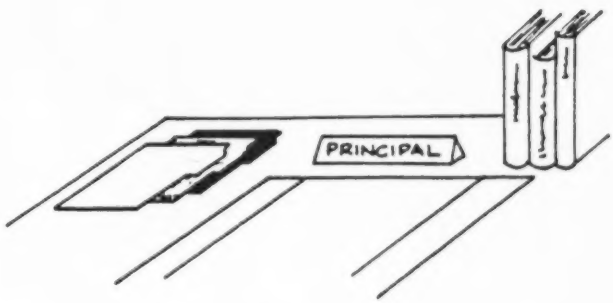
When we drive toward an intersection with a traffic light, we usually do one of three things: STOP, GO or PROCEED WITH CAUTION. We don't react to the words, but instead react to the colors red, green or yellow. Our visual conditioning with colors, depending on how we were conditioned, causes us to behave in a particular manner. There is a very effective technique where we can use color stimulation to help us effectively manage our time in dealing with written correspondence that we need to ACT UPON.

ACTION FILES

Using the TRAF IT technique previously discussed, first sift out all correspondence that you intend to ACT UPON. Categorize this ACT UPON correspondence into the groups suggested below and place your correspondence in color coded folders. These folders can have color tabs but for greater visual impact, you should use completely colored folders.

1. Important and Urgent - RED folder
2. Important not Urgent - ORANGE folder
3. Would Be Nice - YELLOW folder

These folders can be placed in any convenient area on or near your desk, but should not be placed into a file cabinet. Doing so would negate the color stimulation strategy intended to help you become time-efficient. These brightly colored folders can be easily found on your desk. It won't take much conditioning for us to know that RED means danger so we are likely to quickly ACT UPON the correspondence in the RED folder. ORANGE, being similar to RED, establishes the second priority level while YELLOW denotes the third.



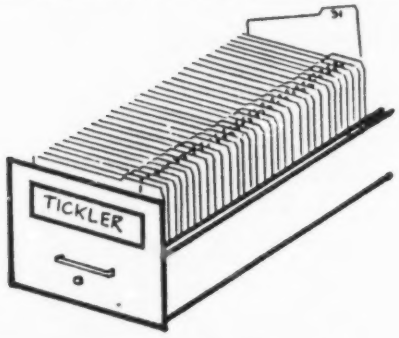
TICKLER FILE

TICKLER FILE?

Commonly used in the business community, the "Tickler File" provides a reminder of upcoming appointments and a file folder for storing any related paperwork.

STARTING YOUR TICKLER FILE

Here is how to start and organize your Tickler File: Take 31 manila folders, number them from one to thirty-one and put them into a file box or drawer in numerical order.



USING YOUR TICKLER FILE

Let's suppose you receive a letter informing you of a meeting you must attend on the 16th of the month. Although you receive the letter on the 2nd of the month, you place it in your Tickler File folder numbered 16, since that's the day of the scheduled meeting. Along with the letter, you add all of the paperwork that you will need for the meeting. In the intervening days before the meeting, you may supply other necessary materials to file 16, so that on that day you will have virtually everything you need and you'll not be rushing around gathering information in a last minute effort.

Each morning when you enter your office, your secretary will have that day's Tickler File on your desk ready for you to review. An alternative is to have the file on your desk a day in advance to allow time for last minute reviews or changes of plans.

The folders themselves can be inserted into the file cabinet to cover either a month or two month period of time; however, it has been my experience that a one-month file works best. As each day passes, you can either discard old Tickler File correspondence or place it into a more permanent file, thus you'll be getting ready to start a new "Tickler" month.

HOW DOES THE TICKLER FILE SAVE TIME?

The Tickler File will thus save you valuable time by providing you with . . .

1. A means to be reminded of upcoming events that require your attention or presence and . . .
2. A convenient and readily accessible folder to hold relevant paperwork for upcoming activities or events.

TICKLER FILE VERSUS DESK CALENDAR

As you are probably well aware, a desk calendar may act as a means to organize a principal's daily schedule and to serve as a reminder of upcoming events, but unlike the Tickler File, it cannot provide a means for housing all necessary correspondence and paperwork. Using the Tickler File gives you organization and saves you precious time.

FLYER FILE

FLYER FILE?

During the course of the school year, we all send or pass out numerous school flyers to parents, teachers, custodial staff and students. As you already know, some of the same problems and questions need to be addressed each year. In order to deal with these recurring concerns in the most time-efficient manner, it is helpful to keep the correspondence used the previous year and to maintain it in the chronological order in which it was disseminated.

SAVING TIME DAILY

Keeping a Flyer File for every written correspondence and putting it in its chronological order will preserve valuable time not only from year to year, but on a daily basis. As you know, we often get a call inquiring about a flyer that was sent out days and even weeks earlier. It saves time when you can go to your Flyer File and review the document.

CHRONOLOGICALLY ARRANGE YOUR FILE IN A LOOSE LEAF BINDER

Simply placing your correspondence in a manila folder and sifting through your flyers to determine when and if something has already been sent out will not do. The mis-arrangement and loss of papers would be virtually inevitable. For this reason, and for time's sake, it is best to have these flyers chronologically arranged in a loose leaf binder. Each time a flyer is sent out, it is dated and the secretary inserts a copy into the binder being sure to place it directly beneath the last one.

DESK DRAWER GARBAGE

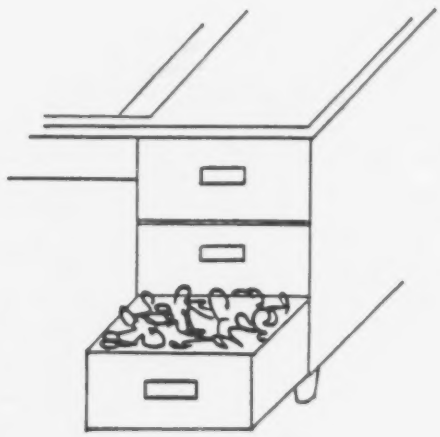
WHEN IN DOUBT THROW IT OUT?

Time Management experts say that 74% of what we file away is never used again! So, "when in doubt, throw it out!" Some principals have told me that nothing clears the mind better than clearing the desk. The practice of throwing out is good but first consider an intermediary step that might be wise to institute.

RETRIEVABLE GARBAGE

Try using the bottom drawer of your desk as a daily wastebasket. Have your custodian empty it each morning about ten o'clock. This will give you more than 24 hours to retrieve items that you have thrown away and have had "second thoughts" about over the night. Knowing you have a chance to reverse your decision to discard a document will give you more courage to throw things out.

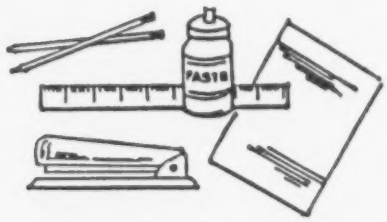
When making decisions about throwing papers away, ask yourself this question, "Can it be readily replaced if I need it at a later time?" If the answer is yes, throw it away.



DON'T SHARE SUPPLIES

TO SHARE OR NOT TO SHARE?

The old adage, "it's better to give than to receive" certainly has applicability to the principalship, but not when it comes to supplies.



MAINTAIN A COMPLETE COMPLIMENT OF SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Time management experts in the business community have found that one of the greatest causes of lost time, even at the top levels of the corporate structure, was due to executives trying to find scotch tape, scissors, a stapler, glue, paper, etc. I have read where several major corporations have placed a supply cabinet in each executive office to make certain that every executive has a complete compliment of the materials that are needed. This practice sounds overly simplistic but it makes a difference. An executive's time is too limited to waste looking for some item that was loaned out. I recommend you find a place in your office to store a complete compliment of the supplies you may possibly need. You should instruct your secretary to keep your personal supply area well stocked and "off limits" to others.

TIME-AGENDA

WASTED MEETING TIME

How many of you have attended meetings where one person was dominating the "air time" and you were getting more and more frustrated as you watched your valuable time being needlessly wasted. There is a simple, yet efficient strategy to eliminate this problem. I refer to it as a "Time-Agenda."

This strategy will enable you to accomplish more in a shorter time period by telling your staff that you are cognizant of time and have no intention of wasting it. It will also give you a vehicle to stop the person who is unproductively "rambling on."

TIME-AGENDA?

A Time-Agenda is similar to an ordinary written meeting schedule with one major exception: EACH TOPIC ON A TIME-AGENDA IS FOLLOWED BY A TIME ALLOTMENT. Here's how it works:

First write an agenda with the topics to be covered; at the outset of the scheduled meeting have each presenter indicate the time he/she will require. Encourage your presenters to indicate their time needs exactly and to use odd minutes, such as seven minutes, 18 minutes or 23 minutes. Using odd minutes helps to convey the message that you are time conscious. If you are a scheduled presenter, you should also indicate the time you will need. As the anticipated time allotments are given, each person attending the meeting should note these times on his/her copy of the agenda.

Realistically, it is virtually impossible to follow to the letter a Time-Agenda; however, I have found such meetings time-efficient and generally within approximately 95% of the overall time frame. A sample Time-Agenda follows:

KEEPING "TIMED"

So that you show your intention of following the Time-Agenda, appoint a time keeper to remind you when to move on to the next topic. Once again, you may not always be ready to move on and it might be necessary to deviate from your time allotments, but the Time-Agenda approach will keep the meeting "going" making your staff aware of the importance you attribute to both your time and theirs.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. On your agenda, prioritize your topics by starting with those that you deem to be the most important and ending with the least important. If time would become a factor and your meeting would have to be concluded early, you will have covered the most significant topics.
2. Distribute agendas one to three days prior to the meeting date. This will allow your staff preparation time which will help to streamline your meetings.
3. Place a word next to each agenda topic stating its purpose. Use either INFORMATION, DISCUSSION or DECISION. This strategy will save meeting time by eliminating needless questions.

   Be careful not to over-use your meeting time for informational items. Research suggests that no more than 20% of meeting time should be devoted to INFORMATION. If you find yourself with a higher percentage, there is surely a better way to do it.

CREATIVE THINKING TIME

E.W. Scripps, a great publisher, once remarked of one man whom he had promoted: "He was obviously a good executive. He did not get excited and always seemed to have time on his hands." That's a fine ideal for others as well as executives: to organize, plan and concentrate on our work so that we always have time on our hands — time to think.

Fred DeArmond, *Rotarian*

My dream is for principals to arrive at the point of managing their time so effectively that they could have time to devote to creative thinking. It seems as though we are constantly in a reactor-to-change rather than an architect-of-change mode.

THREE STRATEGIES FOR MEETINGS/CONFERENCES

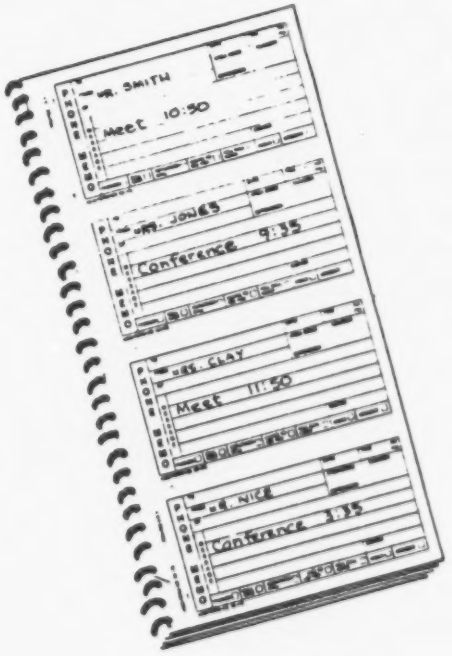
I have three ideas regarding the scheduling and recording of meetings and conferences that might save you some precious minutes:

1. SCHEDULE MEETINGS/ CONFERENCES AT ODD MINUTES

Schedule your meetings/conferences at odd minutes rather than on the hour or half hour. For example, if you schedule a meeting for 3:27 p.m., people attending the meeting will be more apt to be on time because they get the impression that time is of extreme importance to you. Also, when your secretary schedules conferences for you, have her schedule them similarly. When a conference is scheduled to start at 11:00 a.m., the person scheduled to attend subtly feels that he/she has at least a half hour of your time. On the other hand, a conference scheduled to start at 10:44 a.m. communicates that being on time is important and that your time is scarce.

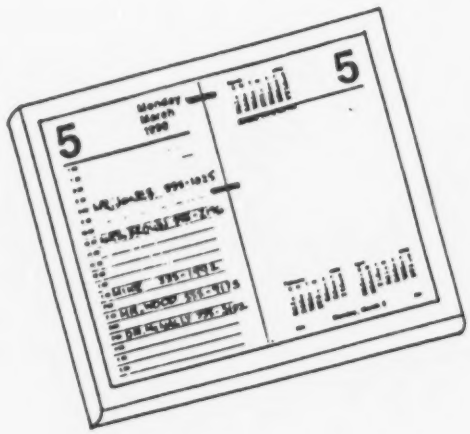
2. HAVE YOUR SECRETARY RECORD PHONE MESSAGES ON NCR PAPER

I also have found that having my secretary use NCR paper slips when giving me phone messages saves a lot of time in the long run. These slips provide a history of calls with phone numbers, dates, time of day, etc. They have been of use to me on many occasions.



3. RECORD PHONE NUMBERS ON CALENDAR

Another technique I use for scheduling meetings, parents conferences, etc., is to note on my calendar the phone number of the person with whom I will be meeting. There are times when I need to call and reschedule the meeting or get clarification of the meeting topic, etc. It is a real time-saver when these phone numbers are on hand.



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TNT?

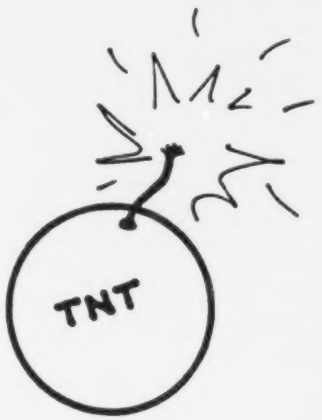
Most of us might not know that TNT stands for Trinitrotoluene. What we do know is that TNT is a combination of chemicals that, once combined, becomes a powerful explosive. In comparing TNT to a principal's job, if we combine a shortage of time, an exhaustive work load and a tendency to procrastinate, we can also have a very explosive situation.

PROCRASTINATION — AN EXPLOSIVE COMPONENT

The explosive aspect of TNT is procrastination. If we procrastinate our job responsibilities, the pressure will eventually build to a point of debilitation. I was told of a situation where a principal was dismissed because he never returned anyone's calls, was always late getting reports in by due dates, etc. When this situation was analyzed during litigation, it was concluded the principal knew what had to be done, had the skills to perform the necessary duties, but was plagued by a tendency to procrastinate and was subsequently overwhelmed with the scope of the job.

TODAY, NOT TOMORROW

I strongly suggest that we as principals must try to find the necessary time to perform our job responsibilities at the earliest possible convenience. In managing your time, think of TNT as meaning TODAY, NOT TOMORROW. Administrators know that if four problems are at hand, the next ten minutes could bring another four problems, creating a snowball effect. Everything gets covered up, but nothing gets resolved. Don't allow procrastination to get you down!



DELEGATE TASKS

PRINCIPALS SHOULD DELEGATE

Even the principal who is a master at time management must admit that only God is omnipotent. The rest of us must ask for help in accomplishing our goals. Delegation is the key to running an efficient school.

We must learn to delegate in order to fulfill our many responsibilities. We simply can't do it all. If we try to do it all, our effectiveness as the educational leader of the school will certainly diminish.

MAKING DELEGATION EFFECTIVE

You may be reluctant to delegate because you feel you could do it better yourself, or because you have failed to plan ahead; you may not want to risk a task not getting done. Effective delegation can minimize these concerns. Choosing delegates carefully, outlining the tasks clearly, and establishing "check points" will make delegating more productive for you.

DEPUTIZE AND RECOGNIZE

For our designated delegates to be able to accomplish their tasks, we need to deputize them. Assigning a task and then not giving your delegate authority in the endeavor will surely scuttle the mission. Allowing others to have authority in areas that normally are the responsibilities of the principal are sometimes difficult to give up, but unless we do so, we will have to forget the notion of delegation. Finally, be sure to establish clear guidelines as to the scope of the authority that you will allow.

Once we have delegated, we must continually offer genuine praise for all that is being accomplished. Praise doesn't cost a dime. Why hold it back? Without commendation for a job well done, you will find it more and more difficult to find delegates.

WHAT SHOULD I DELEGATE?

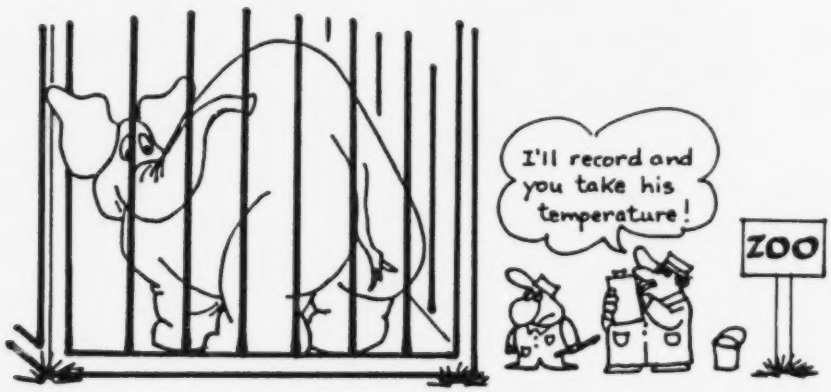
Take care of yourself when deciding which tasks to delegate. Delegate those things that might be "dirty work" for you but will give the person assigned the task a chance to demonstrate responsibility and expertise. Don't delegate the things that you enjoy doing; we have to get our strokes and perks where we can. But be sure to select the best suited person for a particular task.

MONITORING DELEGATION

Effective delegation will require supervision on your part. You need to have control over the delegated task, but must be careful not to impose too much control. Over-control could result in a loss of self-confidence in your delegate. You will need to establish both short-term and long-term check points to monitor progress and provide immediate feedback along the way.

TRAINING DELEGATES

There are tasks you may wish to delegate that require special skills or training. In most cases you will need to be the trainer. It will expend some of your time to do this; however, you need to think "long-term" rather than "short-term." For example, if you would have to expend 15 hours of your time to train an individual to perform a certain task, over the course of the school year that individual could possibly save you 40 to 50 hours of your valuable time . . . time that you could use elsewhere. Sometimes we have to INVEST TIME IN ORDER TO SAVE TIME.



DEALING WITH CONFLICT

FREEDOM FROM CONFLICT, ONE OF OUR GOALS

. . . to insure the domestic tranquility

This phrase extrapolated from the Preamble to our Constitution reveals the desire of our forefathers to have a society free from major conflict among its people. With only the conflict of the Civil War as an exception, we've been very fortunate to enjoy over 200 years of domestic tranquility.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS ARE NOT TRANQUIL PLACES

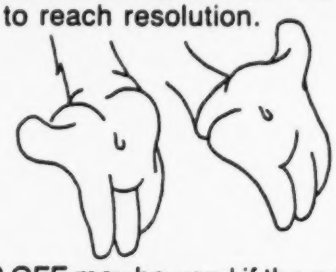
On an individual-to-individual basis within our society, we know things are not always tranquil. A school building is like a microcosm of our society. Whenever you have a group of people working along side one another for over 180 days each year, as we do in our schools, you are bound to have some disagreement and conflict.

The building principal has to work at maintaining the domestic tranquility within the school building. When confronting conflict between a teacher and a parent, a teacher and a student or a teacher and another staff member, the time-efficient principal should first decide what hand he/she is going to play in seeking resolution among the conflicting parties.

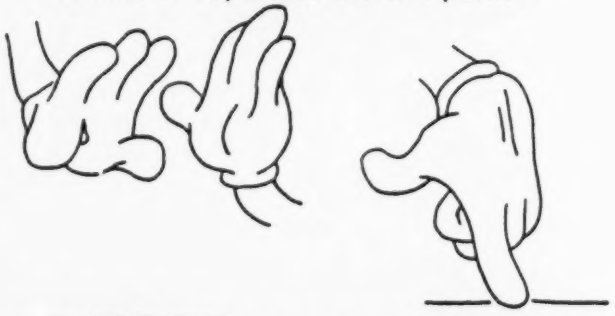
STRATEGIES FOR MINIMIZING CONFLICT

The time-efficient principal should consider three options when dealing with conflict:

1. HELPING HANDS is a means whereby the principal brings the conflicting parties together, helping each party clarify points of disagreement. He/she then acts as a mediator between the two parties. As mediator, the principal, practicing friendly intervention strategies, tries to get both parties to reach resolution.



2. HANDS OFF may be used if the principal determines a course of non-intervention. In this posture, the principal ignores the conflict or separates the two parties.



3. HANDS ON is an approach where the principal attempts to resolve the conflict by acting as arbitrator. He/she listens to each of the conflicting parties' points of view, makes a decision and imposes it upon the conflicting parties.

Whenever I have had to deal with conflicting parties, I have found it advisable to first decide the course of action I'm going to follow. It gives me a focus and results in more efficient use of my time. I'm not sitting there listening to two people argue on and on and getting nowhere. I have a process to follow so I can keep the discussions moving toward a resolution of the conflict.

PARENT COMPLAINTS/ CONCERNS

ANGRY PARENTS CAUSE TIME LOSSES

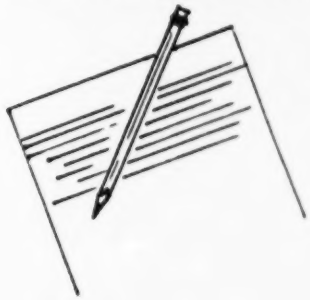
Dealing with the angry parent is never a pleasant experience. It can be a major source of stress, causing us to expend a great deal of our time. In order to make the most efficient use of the time that I devote to an angry parent, I follow a FIVE step process:

FIVE STEPS TO DEAL WITH ANGRY PARENTS

1. REDUCE THE EMOTIONALISM OF THE PARENT

There are several different strategies for doing this:

- Ask the parent to repeat the problem. This gives me time to collect my thoughts and has a calming effect on the parent.
- Write down the salient points of the parent's concern as he/she is talking. This slows the pace of the verbiage as I ask that certain bits of information be repeated. This allows time for the parent to calm down and gives me time to think. In addition, this fosters a genuine feeling in the parent's eyes that I see the seriousness of the problem. Putting something in writing gives the message that it is important.



- Practice "reflective interaction." In this process I listen to the parent and when the opportunity presents itself, I validate what I think the parent is feeling, i.e., "I see you are very angry about this situation" or "I can tell you are upset with your son's teacher." Emotionally charged people want someone to know how they feel. After they have communicated their feelings, they become calm and more rational. At this point I can now move on to developing a plan of action.

2. RESTATE TO THE PARENT THE SALIENT POINTS OF THE COMPLAINT

I state back to the parent the salient points of the complaint and ask for clarification when necessary.

3. SUGGEST A PLAN OF ACTION

I suggest a plan of action that includes what I am going to do to resolve the problem and what the parent is going to do.

I feel it is vital to give the parent something to do because it gives him/her a responsibility to directly help the child. I have found that when I didn't build a component into the plan of action for the parent, he/she usually called me back for additional discussion. It seemed that after reviewing the conference on the way home or with the spouse, the parent felt his/her hands were tied and subsequently relied solely on me to resolve the problem. Getting the parent involved in seeking a solution will save you time in the long run.

4. DEVELOP A TIME LINE

I then develop a time line of what will be done. Included in this time line are the parent tasks; for example, you are going to call me back next Friday.

5. SUMMARIZE THE PLANNED STEPS

Finally, I ask the parent to summarize the steps in our plan. This reinforces the idea that something is going to be done.

TELEPHONE DISTRACTIONS

HIGH POWERED SALES SEMINAR

I'm sure you have wasted many minutes trying to politely get a sales person off of the phone. It isn't easy; sales people are trained to keep you engaged. They know that the longer they keep you on the line the better their chance of making a sale. The following advertisement, taken from a trade magazine, illustrates the strategies that sales people use to make a sale:

> Become more successful at selling over the phone — learn how to handle tough objections more confidently and close sales more rapidly.
>
> . . . three low-pressure persuasion techniques that produce high-volume results.
>
> . . . the secret to keeping prospects from hanging up before you've completed your message.
>
> . . . get prospects to call you back.
>
> . . . sell successfully to three common types of prospect personalities.
>
> . . . small talk . . . when it's an effective sales tool or an expensive mistake.

CALLS FOR THE PRINCIPAL — SECRETARY ANSWERED

The time-efficient principal can't afford to waste time on the phone. Here are some strategies you can use:

If you are out of the office when someone calls, have your secretary say, "I'm sorry but _____ is not in his/her office. He/she is scheduled to return tomorrow at 8:00 a.m. Would you please call back at that time? May I have your name please, so I can tell him/her you called?" This puts the pressure on the originator of the call to get in touch with you. Speaking from experience, these callers seldom call again. They either forget to call or they no longer need to talk with you.

It is stressful to return to work, after a day or two away, and find a stack of "Return Call" slips on your desk commonly leading to wasted hours of telephone tag. You make numerous calls, using your valuable time, only to find that no one is in, and the cycle goes on.

CALLS INITIATED BY THE PRINCIPAL

There are times when we need to initiate calls ourselves. On these occasions we can approach these calls in a time-efficient manner by doing the following:

1. Group calls
2. Call from someone else's office or room
3. "Stand" while talking on the phone
4. Smile

You can save some of your valuable time by "grouping your calls." For example, if there are a number of phone calls that you will need to make concerning the suspension of a student, do them consecutively. Call the parents, necessary school personnel and others you may need to contact. If there are a number of students who will be suspended, make those calls during this same time period. By grouping your calls, you will save precious phone minutes because your mental processes will be tuned in to only that area of concern. You won't need to spend time gathering your thoughts from call to call. In addition, you will have

all necessary paper work at hand as opposed to gathering it in a piece-meal manner for each phone call.

Letting the person to whom you are speaking know that you are not in your office conveys the message that your "talking time" is limited, while "standing" enables your diaphragm to relax, which in turn causes the pitch of your voice to be lowered; a low-pitched voice commands respect because it is usually interpreted as a sign of confidence. Confident people are questioned less often than others. It takes time to answer questions.

Lastly, when talking on the phone don't forget to smile. A smile on your face will carry over through the phone. Yes, smiles can be heard. A pleasant tone to your voice will pay dividends in saving time.

STRATEGIES TO GET OFF THE PHONE

You need standard lines or strategies to get off of the phone when engaged with a high powered sales person. I use the "trouble with the phone lines" technique. I start to respond to the caller, even if I have to interrupt, and midway through one of my words I push down the phone disconnect button, severing our conversation. I quickly tell my secretary it is a "red alert." Well versed in this technique, she is ready for the sales person who usually calls back within seconds. She says, "I'm sorry but _____ is on the other line; can you call back later?"

BEST TIMES FOR RETURNING CALLS

Research shows that if you have to return a call and you want the conversation to be time efficient, call at 11:50 a.m. or at 3:50 p.m. At these times, just before lunch and the end of the work day, sales or business people are likely to be in their offices. However, they won't want to carry on a long conversation lest they miss lunch or get home late.

Some would certainly label many of these time-saving telephone strategies as crude or unethical; however, we need to have these skills and techniques in our repertoire in case we find our time being expended in needless telephone conversation.

DROP-IN VISITS

HAZARDS OF THE "OPEN DOOR" POLICY

"To open or not to open," that is the question. The principal who operates with an open door policy needs to be equipped with several key sentences and strategies to diplomatically encourage people, who are taking an inordinate amount of time, to leave his/her office. These "time robbers" are usually sales people who are trained to get into your office and keep you talking. In addition to sales people, drop-in visitors, as you know, often include students, teachers, parents or other staff members. Here's what to do:

STRATEGIES FOR HANDLING SALES PEOPLE

At the outset, clearly establish parameters as to when you can accommodate these sales people. Tell them exactly how much time you can give them. The following phrases can be helpful:

"We really don't need _____ since we recently purchased them from another company."

"I am scheduled for something in five minutes. I can spend that five minutes with you."

"Gee, thanks for stopping by. Please make an appointment for some time next week when we will have more time to discuss your products."

"We really need to talk about this longer than time will now allow. Let me have my secretary set up an appointment for you."

STRATEGIES FOR IN-HOUSE VISITORS

One strategy that you can employ is to "stand up" and move toward the door as you see or sense that someone is coming into your office. You now have two viable options for saving time:

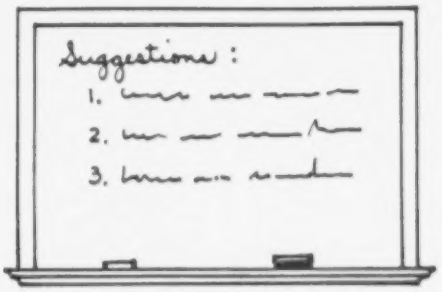
1. You may virtually ignore the visitor by continuing to walk out of your office indicating that you must now attend to something else, or . . .
2. You may inquire to find out how much of your time the visitor needs, in which case you can make a decision to accommodate him/her or indicate that you have another commitment and "keep moving."

Another tactic to discourage these often needless visits is to place your chairs near the rear of your office or at a distant wall. Research tells us that 18 to 24 inches is the optimum distance for oral communication and visitors enjoy maximum speaking comfort in this range. Having to sit outside of this comfort zone, far removed from you, will in effect subconsciously discourage visitors from over-staying. If you can't rearrange your chairs, piling papers or other office supplies on them will convey the message you don't want them to sit down and get comfortable.

LOWERING TRANSACTION COSTS

TRANSACTION COSTS?

The term "transaction costs" is common to the business community and the study of economics. It refers to the "time" required of business managers to explain procedures to employees, answer questions and solve problems. This term is underpinned with the philosophy that time is money.



OPEN SUGGESTION BOARD

I would like to suggest to principals two different strategies to reduce your "transaction costs." The first strategy is to employ what is sometimes called "The Open Suggestion Board." In one school I visited, the principal installed a 10 foot by 4 foot chalkboard in the faculty room. The principal never writes an agenda for a meeting, rather he puts all announcements, etc. on this chalkboard. The chalkboard is updated every Friday for the coming week. Teachers are asked to add announcements they feel important to this board. They may also write in problems or questions they might have. Teachers do not need to indicate their names for their entries. At the weekly faculty meeting, the concerns are discussed and solutions to the problems are brainstormed. The principal and the teachers together decide upon the best solutions and implement them as soon as possible. The building secretary attends the meeting and takes notes which she later types and distributes to everyone. If and when a problem is rectified, the person who listed the problem removes it from the board. Many questions are answered almost immediately when the appropriate person knowing the answer walks by. This board provides a valuable forum for communications and facilitates participatory leadership. It also reduces the time spent (Transaction Costs) by the principal who is continually bombarded with questions.

"LIGHTING THE CANDLE"

The second strategy involves "Lighting the Candle" for the school. This can be accomplished by either the principal or someone else from the building. Lighting the Candle refers to articulating the mission of the school to everyone involved. Metaphorically speaking, as educators we all carry around a little candle and we should be encouraged to light our candle from the building candle. If everyone does this, we will have enlightenment. Everyone will be working in concert and much will be achieved because of the common mission. On the other hand, if no one takes the time to light the building candle, everyone will go around lighting their candles by "flicking their Bics" and the principal will spend much time putting out brush fires. Time spent on articulating the school's mission and philosophy will lower your transaction costs and save you valuable time.

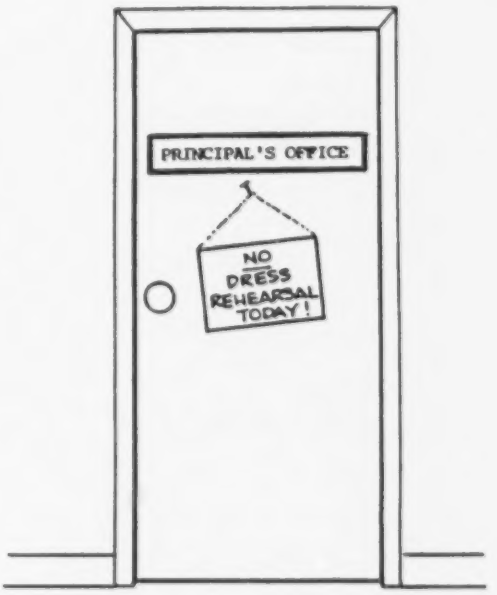
DRESS REHEARSALS

The "dress rehearsal" is the time when the actors, technical support personnel and everyone involved in a production go through the entire production as if it were the actual show. It is the time when every aspect of the production is closely monitored. Very few changes are made, just "fine tuning" occurs. This run-through, without an audience, gives the actors a final practice to get their lines down perfectly.

As building principals, we are often put into a position of attending "dress rehearsals." These dress rehearsals are done by teachers preparing for parent conferences, students with problems, supervisors who may be scheduled to meet with one of your staff members, and others. They come to us and review exactly what they are going to say and do in a forthcoming situation. Some do it to keep us informed of a conference, conflict, etc. which is always a good idea; however, many times the intention is simply to do a dress rehearsal in preparation for the final production.

We don't have the time to attend these dress rehearsals; therefore I am suggesting that you be "up front" at the beginning of the year with your staff by letting them know you appreciate being informed about potential problem situations, however, you don't have the time to have them rehearse for you.

One caution; there are certainly some situations that require a great deal of planning. A parent-teacher conference, for example, could be a situation where the teacher might need to have your assistance and emotional support. Be careful not to appear unapproachable.



TIME-RELATED STRESS

STRESS

We hear the word stress so often that most of us think we know its meaning. The concept of stress was introduced to medicine by Dr. Hans Selye, an Australian doctor, in the mid-1920's. Dr. Selye describes stress as your body's response to any demand upon it.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT

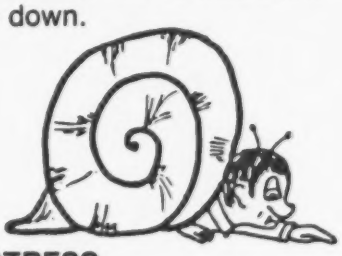
The response to demands upon your body is referred to as the "fight or flight" response. When you are threatened, a part of your brain that controls emotions sends signals to your adrenal glands and the pituitary gland. These glands say: "Mobilize, get ready to fight or run for it!" Substances are secreted that prepare your body to fight or run and repair itself if damage occurs.

I am sure all principals have felt the adrenal response: your heart beats faster, you feel a rush of energy, your blood flow increases. At the same time, blood is redirected from your skin and stomach to your muscles, where it is needed for fight or flight. The oxygen to the memory region of the brain is reduced because it is needed in other areas of the brain (sensory motor region) and as a result, you can't concentrate or remember as well as you normally do.

STRESSORS AND TIME LOSS

This strong fight or flight response was very useful millions of years ago. Today we are not fighting for our lives but our bodies act as though we were. We're living inside bodies designed to hunt mastodons and to battle enemy tribes. The result is that we overreact to the frequent stressors of daily life with a massive mobilization.

If the fight or flight response is evoked many times each day, your body is doing repeatedly what it was designed to do only in emergencies. The chronic stress that principals are experiencing, with no way of releasing it, can cause us to use our TIME less productively and to become physically ill. If we are to meet the responsibilities of the job and stay healthy, we cannot allow stress to slow us down.



COPING WITH STRESS

Principals need to have professional guidance in planning a stress reduction program. This is an area where the school district would do well to offer this professional service. The district would profit because its administrators would be physically and mentally healthier individuals and be more time-efficient and productive.

If professional guidance is not available, the following strategies taken from various stress management programs may be useful:

1. Have something to which you can look forward.
2. Develop personal interests and hobbies.
3. Schedule time for yourself.
4. Avoid "working-lunches."
5. Implement an exercise program.
6. Leave your problems at school.
7. Avoid negative people.

KISS YOUR UGLY DUCKS IN THE MORNING

DUCKS — BEAUTIFUL OR UGLY?

Ducks live near rivers, lakes, and oceans, in muddy, tropical lowlands and in prairie and mountain marshes. Ducks are found in all parts of the world except Antarctica. The drakes, which are the males of the species, have bright-colored feathers in simple patterns. Their colors include green, chestnut, blue, black, white, and shiny, rainbow patches. They are truly some of the most beautiful animals on earth. However, all of us have probably heard of Hans Christian Andersen's, THE UGLY DUCKLING. In this story the poor little duckling wasn't beautiful. All of the other ducklings avoided him because he wasn't fun to be around.

KISSING UGLY DUCKS?

There are "ugly ducks" that confront us every day. They are the problems that cause interpersonal conflict and great stress. My suggestion is to KISS YOUR UGLY DUCKS IN THE MORNING and your day is bound to get better.

It is natural for us to procrastinate and put off doing these unpleasant tasks. We often put them off until late in the day and then let them carry over to the next morning. As the day progresses, the stress keeps building and we become gradually less and less effective with our overall job performance. Kissing your ugly ducks early will save you unnecessary stress resulting in a more efficient use of your time.

THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO LIKE CHANGES ARE WET BABIES

PEOPLE RESIST CHANGE

Throughout the history of American education there have been literally hundreds of changes in philosophy, organization, methods of preparing teachers, instructional techniques, and curriculum offerings, just to name a few. Today, as in the past, change impacts us all. Research tells us that we resist change, for better or worse, because it threatens the foundation upon which we have developed our self esteem. It's human nature, we are told, for people to resist change.

EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION REQUIRES CHANGE

I believe education should be a dynamic that is always in a state of evolutionary change, moving constantly to a higher level of excellence. The dynamic nature of our schools and educational processes, however, is often difficult to maintain. It has been my experience, as both an educator and a parent, that the only people who like changes are wet babies.

CHANGE TAKES TIME — PLAN FOR IT

Change takes time, not merely because of the physical and ideological transformations that may be necessary, but also because we perceive a threat to our psychological well-being and consequently resist all but the "status quo."

As principal you play an integral part in the change process. So that you do not become debilitated by the resistance you experience, you must plan for it and just accept it as a normal part of the change process. So expect higher transaction costs and budget your time accordingly.

"JUST SAY NO"

It's fashionable to "JUST SAY NO." A New York company has given new meaning to the term "fashion statement." Last fall Topsville, Inc. introduced a line of casual wear bearing the "JUST SAY NO" message and logo. The back-to-school collection featured bright graphics and "JUST SAY NO" messages in ten languages. The clothing-and-accessories collection will eventually include everything from shoelaces to sunglasses.

This is not to say this line of clothing should be adopted as a principal's official uniform nor to suggest that principals adopt the phrase "JUST SAY NO" and overuse it. What I am suggesting is for administrators to become acquainted with the word "NO." Your time is like your money; spend it as you would like. If you don't, someone else will spend it for you. The word "NO" is the greatest time-saving word in your vocabulary . . . use it! For example, one of your teachers might ask you, "Will you be able to attend the 'Famous Explorer Rap Presentations' my students are doing this afternoon at one o'clock?" If there is some reason you are unable to attend, simply answer with a qualified "No, I'm sorry but I have another commitment at that time, but I would like you to share the outcome with me later." It isn't unprofessional to apportion your time carefully. There is danger in our trying to do and be everything for everybody. We tend to overschedule ourselves and accomplish little.

By saying "yes" too often we open the door to other potential problems which in the long run will take even more of our time. Two such problems are:

1. People may become overly dependent upon us, stifling their own growth, and
2. We may find that we are not capable of doing what was asked of us.

SAYING "NO" IS THE BEST STRATEGY FOR SAVING TIME

SYSTEMS AND THE PRINCIPAL

NETWORK SYSTEM?

With the birth of the computer age, an entire new vocabulary came into existence. The use of many common words was expanded to represent some aspect of computer technology. The word "network" is one example. Originally it referred to a system of crossed roads or canals or the making of nets or nettled fabric. Now it refers to the linkage of individual computer terminals to a main server that controls the entire operation. I have expanded the term further to apply this new computer oriented definition to the role of the building principal.

THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL

I view the role of the principal as the main server in a complex "network" of activities and programs. As a building principal you need to have many different systems in your network in order to meet all the requirements the job demands. The illustration at right represents some of the systems we have in operation. The principal serves as a central monitoring agent who has identified checkpoints which provide an analysis of the progress and worth of the individual systems. It is also the function of the principal to create new systems to solve problems and expand programs.

DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC RELATIONS SYSTEM

An example of a new system recently added to our network was a public relations committee of our PTA Executive Board. The superintendent in our district gave the principals the task of broadening public relations by submitting 27 articles to our local newspapers each year. The articles were to tell of newsworthy activities from our individual buildings.

Some principals quickly set to work taking pictures in their buildings, interviewing the teachers involved in exemplary activities, writing the articles and submitting them to the various papers. My approach, however, was that I would be a "manager of systems" whereby a number of people would be involved, each with his/her delegated responsibilities. I went to our monthly executive board meeting and suggested we establish a Public Relations Committee of the PTA. Several people volunteered to serve on the committee which would allocate funds through PTA for film, processing, etc. The committee went as far as to purchase a camera for my school.

As a final order of business, I delegated certain committee members the task of establishing guidelines for the project. I suggested we try to get at least 30 articles published about our school each year. The committee also decided to keep a scrapbook containing all of the press releases to be used as a model for the following year.

The school news requirement was met with little expenditure of time and effort on my part. Whenever a task is identified or a problem needs to be addressed, the time-efficient principal should first determine if a system can be designed to take care of it. He/she must be sure to establish checkpoints to monitor progress and to make necessary adjustments.

SAVING TIME WITH A DATA DISK OF FORM LETTERS

A NEED FOR FORM LETTERS

Each year, as you well know, principals must write numerous letters of appreciation, sympathy, school news, policy statements, recommendations, commendations and congratulations, just to name a few. Most of these letters take a great deal of planning and time to construct. I have found that a very efficient method for curtailing and eliminating hours of letter writing is to have your own data disk of form letters.

CREATING A FORM LETTER DISK

The initial step to create such a disk begins with your gathering copies of every available form of written school correspondence you have in your possession. This would include currently-used letters as well as correspondence from several years back. It seems that somehow the same concerns and situations have to be addressed each and every year. Once is never enough. For that reason alone, you would do well to save copies of whatever you send or give out. In addition, you'll be able to create a disk of all that correspondence by simply having your secretary computer-copy the letters to a software data disk. Once your disk is completed, you may periodically add additional letters as you see fit.

USING YOUR FORM LETTERS

The manner used to save your valuable time lies in the power of word processing whereby any form letter can be customized to meet your specifications. Simply "boot up" your computer, find the letter that fits the general situation, and then use the power of word processing to personalize it by inserting the date, school, name(s) and address. Add, delete or modify sentences and/or paragraphs as you see fit . . . or use the letter entirely as it is written.

APPLE FOR PRINCIPAL

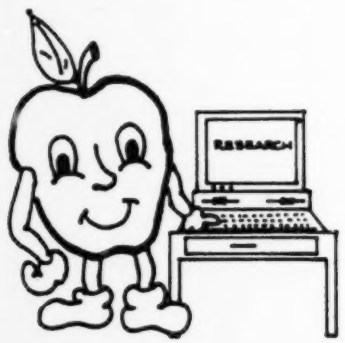
SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

How can we use an Apple™ computer to report observation findings to our teachers?

How can we, who are being more and more burdened with managerial tasks, use the Apple to help PLANT THE SEED FOR INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT?

How can we use technology to re-establish ourselves as the instructional leaders of our schools?

The answer to each of these questions can be as close as our keyboard if we choose to use an Apple computer and a data disk of research citations as part of our repertoire of administrative strategies.



MEANINGFUL INTERACTION BETWEEN PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER

Educational research studies suggest that classroom instruction will improve if we simply visit classrooms more often. What if the classroom visit became more of a learning experience for the teacher? It is reasonable to conclude that instruction would improve if the interaction between us and the teacher were more meaningful and more helpful.

By using computer and research disks we can save ourselves valuable time and improve significantly the classroom observation experience. Here's how it works:

USING THE DATA DISK TO SUPPORT OBSERVATION FINDINGS

I have created data disks containing hundreds of research citations related to effective teaching. After my observation and analysis of the data, I go to my computer to prepare a report of the classroom observation. Using the Appleworks word processing package and my data disks, I can cite various research findings to support my conclusions about the observed teaching performance. By depressing only a few keys, I can intertwine these findings into my written report.

I use the same process to substantiate recommendations that I may suggest to the teacher.

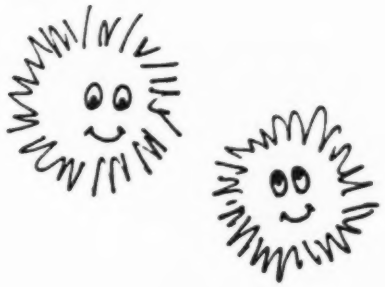
CREATE/OBTAIN A RESEARCH DATA DISK

If you are interested in HARVESTING GREATER REWARDS in the field of instruction and supervision, making more efficient and producive use of the time you devote to working with your staff, consider using a computer and creating a data disk of research citations.

WARM FUZZIES

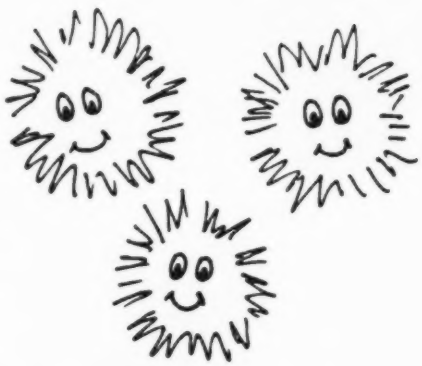
WARM FUZZIES?

Each of us, I'm sure, has on many occasions had one of those days where it seemed that all of our good intentions, for whatever reasons, fell short of the goals we wanted to accomplish. The fact is we may not have done anything right the entire day. A feeling of futility sets in that slowly dampens spirits to the point where we feel virtually unproductive. This is certainly not a unique experience encountered by only a few principals. It happens to us all. It's at times like these that you need to inform your secretary that you will be in your office and you do not want to be disturbed for at least 15 minutes. In your office, you open your file cabinet drawer, reach in and pull out your WARM FUZZY file.



WARM FUZZIES DECREASE STRESS — INCREASE ENTHUSIASM

From the folder you remove letters, notes, awards and certificates of commendation that you have received for a job well done. You've collected this correspondence over a period of years and when you once again read it, somehow your stress level decreases, your enthusiasm for the job is revitalized and after about 15 minutes it all seems worthwhile again. You are ready to deal once again with the responsibilities of being principal.



CREATE A WARM FUZZY FILE

In actuality, you probably have not yet centralized those really nice written correspondences. If not, do it now! Go through your records and sift out all of those Warm Fuzzies and combine them into one file. When I feel down, I use my Warm Fuzzies to pick me back up. They have proven their worth in lifting my spirits and getting me back into a time-efficient mode of operation. I'm sure they'll do the same for you.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I am sure you have days, as I do, when you think it would be easier being the mayor of a large city than a building principal. The juggling act of the principalship often becomes impossible and you find yourself on overload and in the midst of the HURRIED PRINCIPAL SYNDROME.

It is my hope that, as you read through this manual, you found some practical ideas to put into operation which will save you some time. Spend these recaptured minutes to do something for yourself rather than devoting the time to additional job related tasks. Not to sound self-serving, but, we must take care of ourselves in order to be physically prepared to function at the high energy level that our job demands.

I would suggest you make use of this manual by first identifying the areas where you may be wasting time and then reviewing and incorporating one or two of the HURRIED PRINCIPAL strategies into an action plan. Be sure to write down this action plan. Research tells us that we are much more likely to pursue our goals when they are written down. After you get a couple of strategies in place, try a few more. Not all of these strategies are applicable to each of us but if you are able to save just 15 minutes a day because of an idea you got from this manual, your time will have been well spent.

Yes, the responsibilities of being principal are overwhelming, but that's our job and we all strive to do our best. But we have another obligation; we need to take care of ourselves both mentally and physically, be happy and enjoy our lives. How we manage our TIME, both on and off of the job, will be a decisive factor in our quest for excellence and happiness.